

Archaeology Case Studies

Recording Indiana's Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Resources

In 1996 Congress enacted legislation for the Revolutionary War/War of 1812 Historic Preservation Study. The program was eventually funded in 2000 and was designed to identify sites and associated historic properties regarding the Revolutionary War or War of 1812. The National Park Service (NPS) assigned the study to the Cultural Resources Geographic Information Services and the American Battlefield Protection Program, which worked with an advisory committee of scholars.

The National Park Service contracted with the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office (Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology [DHPA]) to complete the survey and documentation of Indiana's five battle sites: Fort Harrison (Vigo County), Fort Wayne (Allen County), Mississinewa (Grant County), Tippecanoe (Tippecanoe County), and Vincennes, (Knox County), and four "associated historic properties:" Fort Harrison, Fort Wayne, Fort Sackville and Vincennes, and Prophetstown. DHPA staff members Dr. Rick Jones, Amy Johnson, and Frank Hurdis were responsible for recording and surveying all of the chosen Indiana battlefields and associated historic sites with the exception of the ones in Vincennes, which were documented by NPS staff. DHPA staff attended extensive training sessions (covering required documentation levels and techniques, GPS [global positioning system], and more) held by the NPS in Indiana for a week in 2001, and then began the actual work to complete the surveys.



The Tippecanoe Battlefield in Indiana is so significant that it is a National Historic Landmark.

RESEARCH

Extensive research was completed for each of the Indiana sites which had been chosen. The researchers drew upon records and primary sources available at the state level, and particularly at the local level. Contacts were made with, for example, local historical societies, libraries, local governmental offices (such as surveyors) and landowners, with the goal of finding as much information as possible for the individual historic properties. Items such as historic (and modern) maps, books, land ownership records, photographs, postcards, archaeological records, and State and National Register documents were reviewed. Information gleaned from these types of sources provided the researchers with valuable documentation to combine with the field research and investigations.



Historic postcards showing various views of one of the fort and battlefield sites recorded during the project.

FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

Field investigations consisted of physically locating the relevant sites and recording them through GPS (Global Positioning System) technology, mapping, and photography. This type of documentation is critical in determining the current physical integrity of the sites, their state of preservation, any potential threats to the properties, and their potential eligibility to the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures and the National Register of Historic Sites and Structures.



Amy Johnson using GPS technology to record a location related to Fort Harrison in Vigo County.

DOCUMENTATION

The required, specific types and levels of documentation for this project were detailed and standardized. Once the research and fieldwork was completed, then began the process of summarizing all the information that had been gathered over many months. Geographic Information System (GIS) software was used to compile the digital data regarding preliminary site boundaries, proposed potential National Register boundaries, photo points, and more. Based on research and fieldwork, maps were generated showing troop movements and positions, battle locations, associated historic property locations, and other relevant features. Hard copies of the survey forms and many documentation sources were organized and sent to the NPS as well as the maps, photographs and other required data.

Information was submitted electronically as well as in hard copy form. Image from the Revolutionary War & War of 1812 Study webpage.



Working together, this type of project fosters additional appreciation for our collective past, and preserves the information for the future. Our staff was pleased to assist in this important project, and contribute to the further understanding of, and appreciation for, the resources related to these two wars so critical in the development of our state and nation.

Case Study Credit

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